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Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the audit of the policies and procedures for recruiting Department of Peacekeeping Operations staff

Note by the Secretary-General

1. Pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 48/218 B of 29 July 1994, 54/244 of 23 December 1999 and 57/287 A of 20 December 2002, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit, for the attention of the General Assembly, the attached report, conveyed to him by the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services, on the audit of the policies and procedures for recruiting staff for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

2. The Secretary-General takes note of the findings and generally concurs with the recommendations made in the report, which will contribute to the implementation of human resources management reform in the Secretariat.

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Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the audit of the policies and procedures for recruiting Department of Peacekeeping Operations staff

Summary

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/287 A of 20 December 2002, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted a further audit of the policies and procedures for recruiting Department of Peacekeeping Operations staff. The audit, which was conducted from May to July 2003, focused on appointments of staff in the Professional category and above made during 2002 on the basis of the recommendations of the appointment and promotion bodies or after review by the central review bodies. Most of the appointments related to additional posts authorized by the General Assembly in its resolution 56/241 of 24 December 2001 for implementing the recommendations of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (A/55/305-S/2000/809).

The audit found that the average time frame for recruiting staff in the Professional category and above in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations during 2002 was 347 days. This was significantly higher than the goal of 120 days envisaged in the report of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform (A/55/253 and Corr.1), and was attributable mainly to the substantial effort required to process the large number of applications. Of the 105 vacancies in the Professional category and above filled during 2002, 103 were advertised before the introduction of the new staff selection system, which came into force on 1 May 2002. Recruitment actions for most of those posts were processed through the web-based Galaxy system at a time when the system was still being developed. The problems encountered by the Department and the Office of Human Resources Management during this period, combined with the volume of applications, contributed to slowing down the recruitment process instead of accelerating it. In the opinion of OIOS, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations should be able to significantly reduce the recruitment time frame in future years, particularly because the surge in vacancies experienced during 2001 and 2002 appears unlikely to recur in the near future.

The criteria for determining staff members' eligibility to apply for vacancies have undergone significant changes with the issuance of administrative instruction ST/AI/2002/4 promulgating the new staff selection system from 1 May 2002. Section 5.6 of the instruction appears to indicate that a staff member who has served the minimum occupancy period in a post is eligible to be considered for any post, even if it is two or more levels higher than the staff member's current level. OIOS is concerned that this provision was not articulated in the report of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform or explicitly enunciated in the administrative instruction. The sample review of applications by OIOS showed only one case in which a staff member in the Professional category applied for and was appointed to a post that was two levels higher than the staff member's current level. If Section 5.6 of the administrative instruction was intended to allow staff members to apply and compete for posts two or more levels higher than their current level, the lack of clarity in eligibility requirements may have deprived many staff members of that opportunity. The audit also identified instances in which ineligible staff members were shortlisted and evaluated for an advertised post. In several cases, errors were

made in determining the eligibility of candidates at the 15-day and 30-day marks. These were attributable primarily to the lack of clear eligibility requirements, which are open to different interpretations. OIOS recommended that the Office of Human Resources Management carefully examine the implications of these complex eligibility requirements and clarify them to ensure transparency and equity in recruitment and promotion. *The Office stated that in March 2003, guidelines on the application of eligibility requirements had been published in the Human Resources Handbook on the United Nations Intranet web site. Also, a review of existing eligibility requirements would be conducted as part of the upcoming assessment of the experience acquired from the new staff selection system.*

The biggest challenge facing managers in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Office of Human Resources Management was reviewing approximately 13,800 applications received in response to the 76 vacancy announcements issued during 2002. In the absence of a filtering mechanism in the Galaxy system to assist them in excluding candidates who did not meet the broad requirements of the advertised post, programme managers had to review every application to determine whether the applicant met the broad criteria. In order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the recruitment process, OIOS recommended that the Office of Human Resources Management work closely with managers to develop appropriate filtering techniques for screening applications. *The Office commented that advanced search features had been incorporated into Galaxy during 2003 and that they were continuously being reviewed with a view to improving them.*

OIOS found that most Department of Peacekeeping Operations managers did not use numeric scoring methods for evaluating candidates, evidently because the Office of Human Resources Management had informed the Department that the use of such scoring methods was optional. The few managers who used the numeric scoring methodology built into the Galaxy system clearly demonstrated the value of using such a system in increasing objectivity and transparency in recruitment. OIOS recommended that, in accordance with the Secretary-General's proposals for human resources management reform, the Office of Human Resources Management ensure that managers in the Secretariat use numeric ratings based on predetermined evaluation criteria. *The Office commented that the experience gained from the use of numeric scoring methods would be taken into account in considering other methods, which may be less time-consuming, that have emerged with changes in technology since the publication of the report of the Secretary-General three years ago.*

With regard to geographical distribution, in broad terms, the nationalities of staff recruited by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations during 2002 appeared to be well dispersed. OIOS noted that of the 105 candidates appointed against vacancies in the Professional category and above in the Department during 2002, 37 (or 35 per cent) were women. This was an improvement over the previous year, when the figure was 31 per cent. The Department explained to OIOS the special measures it had taken to achieve a better gender ratio and to improve the overall geographical distribution of staff. A continuation of these efforts should lead to further improvements in gender and geographical distribution in the Department.

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I. Introduction

1. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/287 A of 20 December 2002, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted a further audit of the policies and procedures for recruiting Department of Peacekeeping Operations staff in the Professional category and above during 2002. Most of the vacancies were related to new posts authorized by the General Assembly in its resolution 56/241 of 24 December 2001 for implementing the recommendations of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (A/55/305-S/2000/809). The main objectives of the audit, which was conducted from May to July 2003, were to determine whether existing practices: (a) ensured the effective and efficient management of recruitment; (b) promoted transparency in the selection process; and (c) facilitated the recruitment of the best available candidates with due regard to equitable geographical distribution and gender balance. The audit also reviewed pending recruitment actions that had been initiated in 2002.

2. OIOS examined the recruitment process, conducted "walk-throughs" using the web-based Galaxy system developed by the Office of Human Resources Management, reviewed relevant documentation and interviewed officials of the Office of Human Resources Management and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. A draft of the present report was made available to the Office of Human Resources Management and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations for review. Their comments are shown in italics.

II. Recruitment process

A. Overall recruitment time frames for vacancies in the Professional category and above

3. The recruitment process commences with the Department's request for the issuance of a vacancy announcement and concludes with the recommended candidate's approval by an official authorized to make the decision on behalf of the Secretary-General. In its previous report on recruiting Department of Peacekeeping Operations staff (A/57/224), OIOS had determined that the average time frame for filling vacancies in the Professional category and above was 264 days for posts approved by the General Assembly on an emergency basis and 362 days for regular posts filled during 2001. The current audit found that the average recruitment time frame for posts in the Professional category and above filled by the Department in 2002 was 347 days (see table 1). Of the 105 vacancies in the Professional category and above filled during 2002, 103 were processed through the former appointment and promotion bodies in accordance with procedures applicable for vacancy announcements issued prior to the introduction of the new staff selection system on 1 May 2002 (see ST/AI/2002/4). Only two vacancies were filled during 2002 under the new staff selection system. The new system enables programme managers to expedite the selection process by considering eligible staff members for a lateral move 15 days after the issuance of the vacancy announcement (i.e., the "15-day mark") and eligible staff members currently serving at one level below the level of the advertised vacancy at the 30-day mark. The average recruitment time frame for the two posts filled during 2002 under the new staff selection system was 154 days.

Table 1
Time frames for recruiting candidates in the Professional category and above

Process steps		Average processing time (days)		
		2001		
From	*To*	*Posts approved on an emergency basis*	*Regular posts*	*2002*
Department's request for vacancy announcement	Vacancy announcement issuance	20	34	27
Vacancy announcement issuance	Vacancy announcement deadline	73	55	69
Vacancy announcement deadline	Shortlist sent to Department	53	34	80
Shortlist sent to Department	Department recommendation	72	185	119
Department recommendation	Secretary-General's approval	46	54	52
Entire process		**264**	**362**	**347**

4. The average recruitment time frame of 347 days was still significantly longer than the goal of 120 days envisaged in the report of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform (A/55/253 and Corr.1). There were no reliable statistics permitting a comparison of that average with the averages of other departments within the United Nations Secretariat. In a report on progress and impact assessment of management improvement measures (A/58/70), the Secretary-General reported to the General Assembly that the recruitment time frame for vacancies in the Secretariat had been reduced to 147 days during the period from May to December 2002. However, the proposed programme budget of the Office of Human Resources Management for the biennium 2004-2005 (A/58/6 (sect. 29C)) indicated that the estimated recruitment time frame for 2002-2003 was 200 days and the target for 2004-2005 was 120 days. A management letter of the Board of Auditors dated 5 May 2003 on the audit of the Office of Human Resources Management indicated that the recruitment time frame in the Secretariat ranged from 136 to 372 days. In the opinion of OIOS, the average time frame of 347 days for filling vacancies in the Professional category and above in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations during 2002 was attributable mainly to the substantial workload associated with the large number of vacancies, including the 64 additional posts approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 56/241 for implementing the recommendations of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations and processing the large number of applications received in response to the vacancy announcements.

5. Recruitment actions for most of the posts filled by the Department during 2002 were processed through the web-based Galaxy system at a time when the system was still under development. The problems encountered by the Department and by the Office of Human Resources Management during those stages contributed to slowing down the recruitment process instead of accelerating it. Initially, it took some time for programme managers to become familiar with the system and to gain

a proper understanding of its features. The Galaxy system was designed to administer the new staff selection system that was to become effective on 1 May 2002. However, since a vast majority of vacancy announcements relating to posts in the Department had already been issued prior to 1 May 2002 (and therefore were governed by a different recruitment procedure), the Galaxy system processes had to be re-engineered to comply with the requirements of the prevailing appointment and promotion procedure. Also, applications pertaining to military and civilian police vacancies, the circulation of which is limited to Member States, had to be processed outside the Galaxy system since those posts were not to be advertised through Galaxy. Furthermore, in some instances the candidate evaluation and selection process had to be conducted outside of Galaxy owing to technical problems in accessing and recording data in the system.

6. In the opinion of OIOS, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations should be able to significantly reduce recruitment time frames in future years. The surge in vacancies that the Department experienced in 2001 and 2002 as a result of the recommendations of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations appears unlikely to recur in the near future. Through human resources planning, the Department should be in a better position to anticipate vacancies; the availability of generic job profiles should expedite the issuance of vacancy announcements; and the delegation of selection authority to the heads of departments in accordance with administrative instruction ST/AI/2002/4 should eliminate the time required under the previous system to obtain approvals of the appointment and promotion bodies and the official designated to make the decision on behalf of the Secretary-General. These factors should enable the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to achieve a significantly shorter recruitment time frame in future.

B. Vacancy announcements and generic job profiles

7. In its previous audit (see A/57/224), OIOS identified several inconsistencies and disparities in job requirements for similar posts and/or posts at the same level in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. OIOS had recommended that the Office of Human Resources Management remedy this situation by preparing generic job profiles and ensuring that the requirements indicated in vacancy announcements were consistent with the respective generic job profiles. The current audit found that generic job profiles had been prepared for a large number of the Department's posts, thereby leading to a greater degree of consistency in job requirements for similar posts and/or posts at the same level. OIOS also noted a high degree of consistency in the job requirements pertaining to posts at the same level in the Department's Military Division and Civilian Police Division. The new staff selection system requires the prior approval of evaluation criteria by the central review bodies. Since the evaluation criteria are based on the requirements indicated in the proposed vacancy announcement, the review of evaluation criteria by the central review bodies serves as a mechanism to minimize or eliminate inconsistencies and disparities between job requirements for similar posts and/or posts at the same level, unlike under the previous system, which did not provide for such reviews by the appointment and promotion bodies prior to the issuance of vacancy announcements. These improvements in recruitment policies and procedures have contributed to a greater degree of consistency in vacancy announcements.

8. Notwithstanding these improvements, OIOS found a few instances in which the job requirements for posts at the same level in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations continued to be inconsistent. For example, vacancy announcements for posts at the P-5 level variously indicated the required amount of experience as "10 to 15 years", "over 13 years" or "minimum 15 years". Likewise, some vacancy announcements for posts at the D-2 level required "significant experience", while others stipulated "minimum experience of 20 years". Another vacancy announcement required "a minimum of 15 to 20 years" of which "over 10 years should be at the international level". The selected candidate had more than 20 years of experience but did not appear to meet the requirement of "over 10 years at the international level". These inconsistencies occurred because no generic job profiles had been prepared for those posts, apparently because such posts were limited in number. *The Department of Peacekeeping Operations clarified that each vacancy announcement had been prepared on the basis of a classified job description or a generic job profile, in accordance with the applicable procedures.* In the opinion of OIOS, the Office of Human Resources Management should standardize the minimum qualifications required for posts at various levels within an occupational group and ensure that future vacancy announcements consistently reflect those requirements. *The Office of Human Resources Management commented that it continued to work with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to ensure that this was done.*

C. Lack of clarity in eligibility requirements

9. Most of the vacancies filled by the Department in 2002 were governed by recruitment procedures under the old system; that is, they were based on recommendations made by the appointment and promotion bodies. Serving staff members who had been recruited through a national competitive examination or on the basis of a recommendation of an appointment and promotion body were eligible to apply for vacancies at their current level or one level higher, provided they met the applicable seniority requirements (see ST/AI/1999/8, sect. 4.1).

10. The eligibility requirements changed significantly with the introduction of the new staff selection system on 1 May 2002. The new system seeks to implement the Secretary-General's proposals for comprehensive reform of human resources management based on the series of "building blocks" described in his report on human resources management reform (A/55/253). Under the new system, the Office of Human Resources Management reviews candidates' applications and determines their eligibility for consideration at the 15-day, 30-day and 60-day marks in accordance with the provisions of administrative instruction ST/AI/2002/4. Staff members who apply for a lateral move to a post at the same level are eligible to be considered at the 15-day mark, and staff members who apply for a post one level above their current level are eligible to be considered at the 30-day mark, provided they have served for a minimum period of one year in their current functions and have had a prior lateral move at that level. OIOS reviewed a sample of applications and found instances of ineligible staff members being shortlisted and evaluated for the advertised post. There were also several errors in determining the eligibility of candidates who had applied for posts in the Department. One candidate who had never served with the United Nations and was therefore ineligible for consideration at the 30-day mark was nevertheless declared eligible. Some staff members who

were eligible to be considered at the 30-day mark had been considered eligible at the 15-day mark and vice-versa. One staff member who had applied for three different vacancies at the same level was considered to be eligible at the 30-day mark for two posts and at the 60-day mark for the third post. Likewise, a staff member was correctly considered to be an external candidate (and therefore eligible for consideration at the 60-day mark) when he applied for a post, but when he reapplied for the same post upon recirculation of the vacancy he was considered an internal candidate and deemed to be eligible at the 30-day mark.

11. The audit also identified an instance in which a staff member on loan from an organization within the United Nations system was appointed to a post in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations two levels above the staff member's own level. It appeared that this staff member was only eligible for appointment to a post one level higher, in accordance with section 5.4 (b) (i) of the administrative instruction, since the staff member had been granted a special post allowance to a post at that level for a period of more than two years. OIOS was informed that this staff member was considered to be an external candidate, and was therefore eligible at the 60-day mark under section 5.6 of the instruction, which states that all candidates may be considered for any vacancy by the deadline indicated in the vacancy announcement. It would thus appear that staff members can be deemed eligible for any post, including posts that are two or more levels higher than their current level.

12. OIOS is concerned that this eligibility provision, which enables staff members to be considered for posts that are two or more levels higher than their own, has not been articulated in the Secretary-General's report on human resources management reform or clearly spelled out in the administrative instruction. The sample review of applications by OIOS showed only one case (referred to above) of a staff member applying for a post two levels higher than his or her own level. OIOS believes that for recruitment to be transparent and equitable, it is vital that eligibility conditions be unambiguous and clearly understood by staff. The current eligibility requirements are unclear and open to different interpretations. This may have discouraged many staff members from competing for posts two or more levels higher than their current level.

13. The existing eligibility requirements contained in the administrative instruction could give rise to some unintended or undesirable situations. For example, section 5.1 states that staff members have to meet a minimum post occupancy period of two years (or one year with a prior lateral move at their current level) before they can become eligible to be considered for vacancies. As such, a staff member at the P-3 level can be considered eligible at the 60-day mark for a D-1 post if he or she has served in the P-3 post for the prescribed minimum occupancy period. However, this individual's supervisor, serving at the P-5 level, who has not completed the minimum occupancy period in the P-5 post cannot be considered for the D-1 post. This incongruity is especially untenable since one of the principal aims of the new staff selection system is to abolish the time-in-grade requirements used in the past.

14. OIOS is concerned that the eligibility of staff members to be considered for vacancies at two or more levels above their current level may increase the risk of arbitrariness in recruitment and promotion. Existing control mechanisms may prove to be ineffective in preventing such arbitrary actions. The central review body,

which is considered the ultimate guardian of accountability of the recruitment process (see A/55/253, para. 25), may have no reasonable basis for questioning the candidacy of any staff member since the Office of Human Resources Management considers all staff members to be eligible for all posts irrespective of their level, except that staff in the General Service category are not eligible to apply for Professional posts. Furthermore, the Office itself, which has monitoring responsibility, may be unable to prevent abuse because the candidate is formally eligible. In the view of OIOS, the Office of Human Resources Management should carefully examine the implications of the complexities in eligibility requirements arising from the provisions of administrative instruction ST/AI/2002/4 and clarify them for all staff members within the Organization to ensure transparent and equitable eligibility criteria. *The Office of Human Resources Management commented that efforts continued to be made to clarify the eligibility requirements. Since the introduction of the new staff selection system, guidelines for determining eligibility under the administrative instruction had been issued in March 2003 and made available on the United Nations Intranet to all staff members. A help desk had been set up, with responses provided by e-mail, over the telephone and during in-person visits. In addition, training continued to be provided to managers and staff. The Office further commented that a review of the existing eligibility requirements would be conducted as part of the upcoming assessment of the experience acquired in the implementation of the new staff selection system since 1 May 2002.* OIOS will keep this matter under review in the context of General Assembly resolution 57/305 of 15 April 2003, in which the Assembly requested OIOS to conduct a study on the impact of the Secretary-General's human resources management reform, including in areas such as mobility, training and the role of the central review bodies.

D. Screening of applications

15. The biggest challenges facing managers in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Office of Human Resources Management involved reviewing the large number of applications received and making informed selection decisions within a reasonable time frame. In response to 76 vacancy announcements issued in 2002 for posts in the Department (excluding police and military posts, the circulation of which is limited to Member States), 13,796 applications were received. Of those, 7,536 applications, or about 55 per cent, were received and recorded in the Galaxy system. There was no effective filtering mechanism to sort or search the large volume of applications in order to narrow down the number of candidates to those who met the broad requirements of the advertised vacancy. In effect, each application — irrespective of whether it had been received electronically through the Galaxy system or otherwise — had to be reviewed. This imposed a heavy burden on managers and slowed down the recruitment process considerably. The Galaxy system has a search feature, which was of limited value because about 45 per cent of the applications had been received on paper and could not be subjected to an electronic search. The system also has the capability of requiring each candidate to provide specific yes or no answers to questions that can be built into the vacancy announcement. For example, if work experience in a specific area is an essential requirement for the post, each applicant must state whether he or she has that experience. Candidates who do not meet that essential requirement are automatically excluded from further consideration. However, this capability was not used. In the view of OIOS, the use of such a filtering mechanism

would be of immense value to managers, particularly when they are dealing with a large number of applications. The Office of Human Resources Management needs to work closely with managers to develop such filtering techniques to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the recruitment process. *The Office commented that it had developed and implemented an "advanced search" functionality using a keyword search, which is a convenient and effective tool for screening candidates. This tool was being further enhanced to incorporate the feedback and suggestions received from client departments.*

16. Pursuant to the new staff selection system, effective 1 May 2002, human resources case officers release lists of candidates eligible to be considered at the 15-, 30- and 60-day marks to the concerned manager for further evaluation and selection. Owing to the volume of applications not received through the Galaxy system, including paper applications, the release of those lists was often delayed. Candidates who do not submit their applications within the 15- or 30-day mark are nevertheless eligible to be considered at the 15- or 30-day mark if they meet the eligibility requirements. As a result, managers in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations continued to receive eligible candidates long after those marks had been reached. Some managers said that applications eligible for consideration at the 30-day mark continued to be received even as the selection process was being finalized on the basis of the previous 30-day lists. Sometimes the lists of candidates recommended for selection had to be revised owing to the arrival of a new list, thereby defeating the purpose of the 30-day process. In effect, managers were reviewing 30-day candidates long after the 60-day mark. The Office of Human Resources Management clarified that such incidents occurred because a partial list had been released upon the request of the concerned manager, and the remainder of the list was subsequently transmitted after all applications had been reviewed by the human resources case officer.

III. Use of scoring methods for the evaluation of candidates

17. With a view to increasing transparency in recruitment and preserving the integrity of the process, OIOS had previously recommended that the Office of Human Resources Management develop candidate evaluation criteria in the form of scoring and weighting methods (see A/55/397, recommendation 7). Such scoring methods would enable the reviewing officer to evaluate the qualifications and experience of each candidate in accordance with the evaluation criteria and assign appropriate numerical scores. Candidates with the highest scores could be shortlisted for a competency-based interview. Such an evaluation system would add significant value to the recruitment process and facilitate the shortlisting of the best available candidates. The Office of Human Resources Management had accepted the recommendation and had commented that once the General Assembly endorsed the proposal, the Office would work with departments to formulate a balanced evaluation system. The report of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform envisaged the establishment of numerical scoring methods for evaluating candidates under the new staff selection system.

18. In its previous audit of recruitment in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (A/57/224), OIOS noted that such an evaluation system had not been established. Although the Office of Human Resources Management had provided some documentation suggesting that a scoring system had been used for evaluating

candidates for certain posts, those evaluations were of limited value. OIOS had again recommended that the Office of Human Resources Management establish a scoring system for evaluating candidates. The Office commented that the Galaxy system, which was being developed at that time, would provide the necessary tools to screen and evaluate candidates on the basis of predetermined rating criteria. However, the use of such an evaluation methodology would be optional.

19. The current audit showed that a sizeable majority of managers in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations did not use numeric scoring methods, evidently because the Office of Human Resources Management had indicated that their use was optional. OIOS noted that even though the Department sought confirmation, the Office did not provide written confirmation that the use of numeric scoring methods was optional. The audit also showed that some managers diligently used numeric scoring methods for evaluation whereby each candidate was given a score on the basis of evaluation criteria, and candidates with the highest scores were shortlisted for competency-based interviews. OIOS was pleased to see a well-reasoned record of managers' assessment of candidates in the Galaxy system, including an analytical description of the candidates' performance during the interview. For vacancies governed by the new staff selection system, managers identified up to four candidates from which the department head could make a selection. The few instances in which managers made good use of numeric scoring methods for evaluating candidates clearly demonstrated their value in enhancing transparency and fairness in the recruitment process. In the opinion of OIOS, the Office of Human Resources Management should ensure that all managers in the Secretariat consistently use numeric scoring methods to evaluate candidates, as envisaged in the report of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform. Necessary guidance on the use of scoring methods could be provided online in the Galaxy system. *The Office of Human Resources Management commented that as part of its ongoing effort to improve the functions in Galaxy, the experience gained in the use of numeric scoring methods would be taken into account in considering other methods, which might be less time-consuming, that had emerged as a result of changes in technology since the publication of the report of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform three years ago.* OIOS will keep this matter under review in the context of General Assembly resolution 57/305.

IV. Geographical distribution and gender balance

A. Equitable geographical distribution

20. Legislative mandates governing the recruitment of Professional staff for posts in the United Nations Secretariat require the Secretary-General to ensure that the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity serve as the paramount consideration for employment, with due regard to the principle of equitable geographical distribution, in accordance with Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations. Although a vast majority of posts in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations are not governed by the system of desirable ranges set out in General Assembly resolution 42/220 A of 21 December 1987 and reaffirmed by the Assembly in its resolutions 51/226 of 3 April 1997 and 53/221 of 7 April

1999, established recruitment procedures nonetheless require that due regard be paid to recruiting staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible.

21. The General Assembly, in its resolution 55/258 of 14 June 2001, reaffirmed that the Secretary-General should give the fullest regard to candidates with the requisite qualifications and experience already in the service of the United Nations. Furthermore, in its resolution 55/238 of 23 December 2000, the Assembly accepted the recommendation of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations that troop-contributing countries be properly represented in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, reflecting their contribution to United Nations peacekeeping activities. When recruiting Professional staff members, the Department is therefore required to give due regard to the adequate representation of unrepresented and underrepresented countries and troop-contributing countries. In conjunction with those requirements, the Department is also required to give due regard to special measures for achieving gender equality, as well as the recruitment of candidates who are already in the service of the United Nations.

22. Since most of the posts in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations are not subject to the system of desirable ranges, no clear numerical targets exist to ensure that the Department achieves equitable geographical distribution on the basis of mandated standards. The establishment of such mandated standards becomes further complicated by the fact that some of the major troop-contributing and/or police-contributing countries are overrepresented in the Secretariat with regard to posts covered by the system of desirable ranges. The Department's human resources action plan for 2001-2002, as agreed with the Office of Human Resources Management, stipulated that the Department would continue to make every effort to increase the recruitment of qualified candidates from unrepresented and underrepresented countries. The Department asserted that it also emphasized the need to ensure adequate representation of troop-contributing countries. For example, the Department provided documentation to OIOS indicating that two of the top 10 troop-contributing countries had no representation in the Department as at 30 June 2002. This situation was addressed when three candidates were appointed from those countries during the latter half of 2002.

23. The OIOS analysis of the nationalities of candidates selected for appointment to the 105 posts in the Professional category and above in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations during 2002 revealed the following:

(a) Of the 105 candidates selected, 86, or approximately 82 per cent, were from troop-contributing and/or police-contributing countries. Of the 86 candidates selected, 71 were from troop-contributing countries, including 23 candidates from the top 20 troop contributors. Nine of the selected candidates were from countries that contributed only civilian police, and seven were from countries that had contributed neither troops nor police. However, five of those seven candidates were from countries within the desirable range, and two candidates were from overrepresented countries.

(b) Of the 105 candidates selected, 13 were from countries underrepresented in the Secretariat under the system of desirable ranges, 84 were from countries within the prescribed desirable range and 18 were from overrepresented countries. No candidates from unrepresented countries were selected.

24. In broad terms, the candidates selected by the Department during 2002 appeared to be well-dispersed geographically. However, in view of the special importance attached to equitable geographical distribution by the Organization's legislative bodies, the Department needs to continue to review this matter on an ongoing basis to further improve the geographical distribution of staff in the Department.

B. Gender balance

25. In its previous audit, OIOS indicated that of the 67 Professional staff recruited by the Department during 2001, 21 (or 31 per cent) were women (see A/57/224, para. 27). The current audit found that 37 (or 35 per cent) of the 105 candidates appointed against vacancies in the Professional category and above in the Department during 2002 were women. In the opinion of OIOS, this achievement is significant, particularly in view of the higher number of vacancies filled during 2002.

26. Table 2 provides gender statistics on staff in the Professional category and above in the various offices and divisions of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations as at 30 June 2003. Approximately 52 per cent of those staff members held positions in the Military, Civilian Police and Logistics Support Divisions — functions that are traditionally segregated along gender lines with a male bias. The combined representation of women in those three divisions was very low, at 16 per cent. In the remaining offices and divisions of the Department, the overall percentage of women was considerably higher, at about 48 per cent, although still short of the 50-50 gender distribution goal. The Department explained the special measures that had been taken to achieve a better gender ratio, including the appointment of senior women officers to head the Civilian Police Division, the Administrative Support Division, and the Office of Mission Support. The continuation of such efforts should enable the Department to further improve upon those achievements in gender balance.

Table 2
Gender statistics of staff in the Professional category and above in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (as at 30 June 2003)

	Number of staff			*Percentage*	
Office	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Office of the Under Secretary-General	18	14	32	56	44
Logistics Support Division	78	16	94	83	17
Military Division	57	7	64	89	11
Office of Operations	34	22	56	61	39
Personnel Management and Support Service	14	23	37	38	62
Finance Management and Support Service	17	16	33	52	48
Civilian Police Division	12	5	17	71	29
Office of the Assistant Secretary-General for Mission Support	0	2	2	0	100
Overall	**230**	**105**	**335**	**69**	**31**

V. Recommendations[1]

27. OIOS made the following recommendations on the basis of its review of the policies and procedures for recruiting staff for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Since the same policies and procedures apply to staff recruitment throughout the Secretariat, OIOS suggested that the Office of Human Resources Management consider implementing recommendations 1 to 4 below in recruiting staff for all departments of the Secretariat.

Recommendation 1

28. In order to reduce the recruitment time frame and improve the quality and efficiency of the candidate evaluation process, the Office of Human Resources Management should work closely with programme managers to develop filtering and sorting mechanisms for screening applications based on the requirements of the advertised vacancy (AP2003/55/1/1).

29. *The Office of Human Resources Management commented that it continued to work in this area. An advanced search feature was introduced in 2003 to facilitate the screening of applicants.* OIOS will keep this matter under review in the context of General Assembly resolution 57/305.

[1] The symbols in parentheses in this section refer to an internal code used by OIOS for recording recommendations.

Recommendation 2

30. To enhance transparency and fairness in recruitment, the Office of Human Resources Management should ensure that managers make use of numeric ratings based on evaluation criteria established prior to the issuance of each vacancy announcement, as envisaged in the report of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform. The Office should also provide managers with the guidance necessary for the effective use of such scoring methods (AP2003/55/1/2).

31. *The Office of Human Resources Management commented that as part of its ongoing effort to improve the functions in Galaxy, the experience gained in the use of numeric scoring methods would be taken into account in considering other methods, which might be less time-consuming, that had emerged as a result of changes in technology since the publication of the report of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform three years ago.* OIOS will keep this matter under review in the context of the impending study proposed to be conducted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/305.

Recommendation 3

32. The Office of Human Resources Management should ensure that the qualifications and experience required for similar posts and/or posts at the same level are further standardized within the respective occupational groups (AP2003/55/1/3).

33. *The Office of Human Resources Management commented that it had drafted guidelines on developing vacancy announcements and evaluation criteria. In addition, generic job profiles that had been developed since 2001 were being reviewed to ensure clarity and consistency in job requirements.* OIOS will keep this matter under review in the light of the study proposed to be conducted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/305.

Recommendation 4

34. The Office of Human Resources Management should carefully review the existing eligibility requirements for appointment of staff to posts at higher levels and issue appropriate clarifications to ensure that: (a) the eligibility criteria are consistent with the proposals on human resources management reform previously submitted to the General Assembly; and (b) staff are fully aware of eligibility requirements for application to various posts (AP2003/55/1/4).

35. *The Office of Human Resources Management accepted this recommendation and commented that a review of existing eligibility requirements would be conducted as part of the upcoming assessment of the experience acquired in the application of the new staff selection system since 1 May 2002.* OIOS will keep this matter under review in the light of the study proposed to be conducted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/305.

Recommendation 5

36. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations should continue its ongoing efforts to further improve the geographical and gender distribution of its staff in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions (AP2003/55/1/5).

37. *The Department of Peacekeeping Operations accepted this recommendation.*

(*Signed*) Dileep **Nair**
Under-Secretary-General
Office of Internal Oversight Services